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Rally Mexico: ŠKODA's Tidemand wins WRC 2 and takes series lead, great performance by Rovanperä

- › Pontus Tidemand and co-driver Jonas Andersson took the championship lead in WRC 2 category by driving to victory in Mexico with their ŠKODA FABIA R5
- › Reigning champion Tidemand with nine wins in total most successful driver in WRC 2 history
- › ŠKODA teammates Kalle Rovanperä/Jonne Halttunen also delivered a strong performance winning five stages on the tough gravel roads of Mexico
- › ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek: "Congratulations to Pontus and Kalle. They set all fastest times in WRC 2 category for ŠKODA, proving speed and reliability at the same time."

León/Mexico, 12 March 2018 – ŠKODA factory crew Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE) achieved a dominant WRC 2 win at Rally Guanajuato Mexico, finishing 7th overall with their ŠKODA FABIA R5. With his first WRC 2 win of 2018, Pontus Tidemand takes the championship lead after three rounds. Teammates Kalle Rovanperä and Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) had to retire after the second stage but could re-start under Rally 2 regulations on Saturday and Sunday. They scored five fastest times, finished 5th in WRC 2 category and collected their first championship points of the season.

Reigning WRC 2 Champions Pontus Tidemand and Jonas Andersson, driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, proved their speed and reliability on the tough gravel roads of Rally Mexico, third round of the FIA World Rally Championship 2018. With a faultless drive they led from start to finish, won 17 of the 22 special stages and could repeat their Mexico victory of last year.

Their ŠKODA FABIA R5 was well prepared for the tough conditions in Mexico. The race engines not only had to face the heat of 30 degrees Celsius and more. The stages also reached extreme altitudes, the highest point at 2,737 metres. The correct engine mapping was crucial, because the thin air causes a power loss of more than 20 per cent. While a lot of other teams struggled under these conditions, Tidemand's ŠKODA FABIA R5 was running like clockwork. The Swedish pairing moved as well into the lead of the WRC 2 category standings. Driving his 24th rally within the WRC 2 since 2014, Pontus Tidemand continued to build up an impressive track record: He finished 19 times on the podium including nine victories, which makes him the most successful driver in WRC 2 history.

On Sunday, the final day of Rally Mexico, Tidemand set another two fastest times, totalling 17 stage wins. "I have to thank the whole team for the great support. My ŠKODA FABIA R5 was really fantastic, and it was a real pleasure to drive it on these gravel roads," said Tidemand.

After they hit a stone on the second stage of the rally, 17 years old Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen could re-start under Rally 2 regulations on Saturday morning. They set five fastest times, and Rovanperä was happy to finish his first rally for the factory team ŠKODA Motorsport. "It's a pity, that we had this mishap on the second stage. But I am happy that the team could repair my car, so that I could continue on Saturday and Sunday to get more valuable experience of the World Rally Championship. For my next WRC rally, I will benefit from what I learnt in Mexico," commented the Finnish youngster.



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"Congratulations to Pontus and Kalle. Between them they set all fastest times of the WRC 2 category for ŠKODA, proving speed and reliability at the same time," emphasized ŠKODA Motorsport boss Michal Hrabánek on the podium in León, the country's fifth largest city some 400 kms north-west of Mexico City.

Final Result Rally Mexico (WRC 2)

1. Tidemand/Andersson (SWE/SWE), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 4:04:32.7 h
2. Greensmith/Parry (GBR/GBR), Ford Fiesta R5, +6:44.6 min.
3. Heller/Olmos (CHL/ARG), Ford Fiesta R5, +13:53.4 min.
4. Bulacia Wilkinson/Mussano (BOL/ARG), Ford Fiesta R5, +22:45.9 min.
5. Rovanperä/Halttunen (FIN/FIN), ŠKODA FABIA R5, 1:02.54.1 h

Current standings WRC 2 (after 3 of 13 rounds)

1. Tidemand (ŠKODA), 43 points
2. Kopecký (ŠKODA) und Katsuta (Ford), 25 points
4. Greensmith (Ford) und Sciesiere (Citroën), 18 points

Number of the day: 7

ŠKODA works driver Pontus Tidemand did not only win the WRC 2 category of Rally Mexico in a dominant way, he also conquered 7th position of the overall classification.

The 2018 calendar of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2)

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Monte-Carlo	24/01/-28/01/2018
Sweden	15/02/-18/02/2018
Mexico	08/03/-11/03/2018
France	05/04/-08/04/2018
Argentina	26/04/-29/04/2018
Portugal	17/05/-20/05/2018
Italy	07/06/-10/06/2018
Finland	26/07/-29/07/2018
Germany	16/08/-19/08/2018
Turkey	13/09/-16/09/2018
Great Britain	04/10/-07/10/2018
Spain	25/10/-28/10/2018
Australia	15/11/-18/11/2018



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ŠKODA at Rally Mexico 2018

Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (SWE/SWE), driving a ŠKODA FABIA R5, won the WRC 2 category at Rally Mexico, taking the overall lead in the championship

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO



ŠKODA at Rally Mexico 2018

After re-starting, Kalle Rovanperä and co-driver Jonne Halttunen (FIN/FIN) finished 5th of the WRC 2 category at Rally Mexico

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Source: ŠKODA AUTO

ŠKODA Motorsport Overview

ŠKODA has been successful on the motorsport scene since 1901. Be it on the circuit or in rallies, ŠKODA has celebrated victories and won titles all around the world. Historical highlights include winning the title in the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) for the first time in 2016, numerous title wins in the FIA European Rally Championship (ERC), the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC) and the Intercontinental Rally Challenge (IRC), as well as the victory in the European Touring Car Championship in 1981. ŠKODA teams have also triumphed in the world's oldest and most famous rally, taking several class victories in the legendary Monte Carlo, which was first held in 1911.

The ŠKODA FABIA R5, a high-tech 4x4, was homologated by the International Automobile Federation FIA on 1 April 2015. ŠKODA's new FABIA R5 is successfully continuing the long tradition of ŠKODA Motorsport. Its predecessor, the FABIA SUPER 2000, won 50 national and international titles around the world. In the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC 2) 2016, Esapekka Lappi/Janne Ferm (FIN/FIN) won the title for the Czech car maker. In total, ten of the 2016 season's races in the World Rally Championship were won by a ŠKODA FABIA R5. ŠKODA drivers Gustavo Saba (PRY) and Gaurav Gill (IND) also won the continental championships in South America and the Asia-Pacific region at the wheel of the successful ŠKODA FABIA R5. Nasser Al-Attiyah (QAT) was unbeatable in the Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), while a further ten national titles also went the way of ŠKODA drivers.

2017 was the most successful year in the history of ŠKODA Motorsport. Works duo Pontus Tidemand/Jonas Andersson (S/S) became WRC 2 Champions, ŠKODA Motorsport won the Team Championship. Jan Kopecký/Pavel Dresler (CZ/CZ) won the Czech Rally Championship (MČR) for the third time in a row and are the spearhead of in total 14 crews winning their country's national titles. Furthermore the FIA Asia-Pacific Rally Championship (APRC), the FIA South American Rally Championship (CODASUR) and the FIA African Rally Championship (ARC) have been won by teams competing in a ŠKODA FABIA R5.





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ŠKODA AUTO

- › is one of the longest-established vehicle manufacturers in the world. The company was founded in 1895 – during the pioneering days of the automobile. Today, the company's headquarters remain in Mladá Boleslav.
- › currently offers the following models in the range: CITIGO, FABIA, RAPID, OCTAVIA, KAROQ, KODIAQ and SUPERB.
- › in 2017 delivered more than 1,2 million vehicles to customers worldwide.
- › has belonged to Volkswagen Group since 1991. The Volkswagen Group is one of the most successful vehicle manufacturers in the world. ŠKODA, in association with the Group, independently manufactures and develops vehicles, as well as components, engines and gear transmissions.
- › operates at three locations in the Czech Republic, produces in China, Russia, Slovakia, Algeria and India mainly through Group partnerships, as well as in Ukraine and Kazakhstan through local partners.
- › employs over 30,000 people globally and is active in more than 100 markets.

